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ABSTRACT

Playfulness, a personality trait consisting of sense of humor, manifest joy, and spontaneity, was demonstrated to relate to divergent thinking at the kindergarten and high-school levels. The differential valence given to it by kindergarten-teachers and JHS- and HS-teachers was discussed in relation to creative potential. There was a consensus of positive valence among kindergarten teachers while about half of the JHS- and HS-teachers saw the behavior as disruptive in the classroom. This raises serious questions about the type of classroom climate conducive to playing with ideas and the enjoyment of learning. The influence of playfulness on leisure was discussed in terms of making it not only more creative but also psychologically more satisfying. In this connection the role of the familiar and known in leisure settings was stressed. Playfulness was also seen as one of the growing number of prosocial behavior dimensions that need to be encouraged in the home and, in later life, used as an approach to work and play. In conclusion recommendations for future action and research were spelled out. (Author)

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PLAYFULNESS, COGNITIVE STYLE, AND LEISURE, OR "DO WE NEED TO EDUCATE FOR LEISURE?" [1]

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In the relatively young field of research about leisure, there already seem to be two approaches to the concept of leisure. One is the traditional, illustrated by Webster's (1973) definition as "freedom afforded by exemption from occupation or business;" the other focuses on the attitudinal element as developed by Neulinger and his associates (Neulinger, 1974; 1971; Neulinger & Breit, 1969; Neulinger & Raps, 1972) and might be characterized by the elements of voluntary control, satisfaction, and even enjoyment. In that sense leisure could also apply to one's work. Perhaps what the two have in common is that leisure suggests a loosening of environmental press coupled with voluntary and, more often internal, control over the activity. It is, therefore, not surprising that these traits suggest a relationship to some of the characteristics of play. But play is an amorphous area of behavior and in order to tackle any heuristic problems, it has been used more as a setting to explore cognitive, emotional, social and physical aspects of functioning, and much less emphasishas been given to the question of what makes play "play." It is in answer to the problem of the quintessence of play that this investigator conceptualized, identified in operational terms, and measured the syndrome of playfulness as a quality of play and of the player. Since it

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transcends play and becomes a personality trait of the player, it has considerable relevance to leisure, and the way we approach leisure.

The Major Components of Playfulness and their Relationship to Cognitive Style

The studies about playfulness (Lieberman, 1965; 1966; 1967a; 1967b) which identified and measured the behavior in preschoolers and adolescents suggested three major dimensions in the Playfulness syndrome, namely, spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor. Spontaneity covered physical, social, and cognitive manifestations of the behavior as indicated by the separate scales in the kindergarten format of the Playfulness instrument as well as in the profiles sketched out as part of the Playfulness Scales in the Adolescent format. In kindergartners, a factor analysis showed a centroid factor that accounted for most of the variance and thus suggests that Playfulness (PF) is a unitary trait at that age level. The adolescent's Playfulness syndrome showed a dichotomy after varimax rotation of the principal axes factor analysis, and we labeled the clusters social-emotional and academic playfulness, respectively. Analysis of a Playfulness Trait Check List further confirmed and refined the factorial breakdown, and suggested a syndrome of "bubbling effervescence" as the core of adolescent playfulness.

Behaviorally, we have the young child who hops and skips, chuckles with glee, shows glint-in-the-eye behavior, moves easily from group to group or plays happily on his own, is imaginative in dramatic play, and in his or her play products in clay, blocks, etc. Contrast this with the adolescent's playfulness which, in its social-emotional expression, covers the youngster who moves

around a good deal, shows joy easily, has a sense of humor, likes to be part of a group, is friendly, and somewhat erratic. The academically playful teenager is intellectually alert, enthusiastic, and curious. This student is also highly achievement-oriented, a trait not thought to be part of the Playfulness cluster. The results from the Trait Check List further refined the traits and the dichotomy. On the one hand, we have the attention-getting, entertaining, joking, light-hearted, mischievous, witty, and jovially teasing student. On the other hand, there is the alert, always volunteering, bright, conscientous, enthusiastic, inquiring, knowledgeable youngster who takes his work seriously. Since both at the kindergarten-level and at the high-schoool-level, teachers were instrumental in conceptualizing playfulness in students, the unitary trait dimension in the preschooler and the differentiated clusters in the adolescent tell us also something about the role of play in the educational setting. If we agree that playfulness, with its spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor, represents the quintessence of play, then we must infer that while such behavior is acceptable and possibly encouraged in the kindergarten setting, it seems to have no place in the high-school classroom. If we now assume, as has been demonstrated in empirical research (Durrett & Huffman, 1968; Getzels & Jackson, 1962; Lieberman, 1965; Wallach & Kogan, 1965; Singer & Rummo, 1973; Torrance, 1962) as well as through theoretical formulations (Tomkins, 1963; White, 1959) that playfulness is related to cognitive style, in particular divergent thinking or creative potential, then the implications of the possible stifling of the playful attitude in adolescents become not only apparent but a cause of concern.

A further illuminating fact emerges from the results we obtained when we contrasted the conceptualization of playfulness in adolescents in the school-setting with that in a leisure-setting (Lieberman, 1969) While we found that joke-telling and other humorous exchanges, teasing, pretending, gregariousness, being friendly, horseplay and curious experimenting were "situation-spanning" traits in the Playfulness syndrome, the comments from the student group-workers in the community centers and those from the teachers in the JHS and HS classrooms indicated different valences about these traits. Understandly[ab/], they were much more accepted in the leisure setting than in the classroom. Yet, studies of humor, joy and, to some extent, spontaneity show that these accompany a sense of mastery, which would suggest that there is a constructive use for "fun" in learning. The difficulty lies in working this approach into the classroom setting. Recently there have been a number of novel as well as time-tried techniques to allow more of the play element to enter the classroom. They range from the introduction of tournament games developed by DeVries and Edwards at Johns Hopkins (1974) to simulation games in social studies from the elementary to the high-school level. Two of my colleagues at Brooklyn College (Berger, Note 1; Klein, Note 2) used simulation games in training student-teachers and found that it not only worked in the classroom for the trainee but that the student-teachers themselves, in their preparation of the lesson with their college peers, had such fun that they were reluctant to revert to the role of teacher. But do we necessarily have to assume that it cannot be enjoyable for the teacher as well, especially once he or she is out of a "testing and evaluative" setting? Through experience and familiarity with the material come the opportunity for the teacher to play with ideas and also operate with sense of humor, joy, and spontaneity. This was illustrated to me when I observed

a colleague teaching the rules of concept formation through a a card-game she herself had perfected (Levy, Note 3). To see her smile, make humorous references and, based on the situation, spontaneously reshuffle some of the elements to help students formulate their own idea was an excellent example of playfulness in action.

The Relationship of Playfulness to Leisure

Our previous discussion already suggests one of the more obvious links of playfulness to leisure lies in the association of enjoyment as part of any leisure activity. Another comes from the fact that playfulness has been found to relate to creative potential. Industrial psychologists like Mankin (1975a; 1975b) point out that our post-industrial society does not allow the majority of its workers to obtain fulfilment of their potential in their occupational roles. Since more and more people have time for leisure activities, it is understandably suggested that those of us who cannot find a creative outlet in work may do so in their non-work time which, traditionally, is equated with leisure. A third link, though superficially self-evident, needs further elaboration in the light of recent findings about play. We generally think of play as a major component of leisure activity. On the basis of a recent review of the literature in the light of our own research (Lieberman, 1975), we would like to elaborate on two points here. One is the role of the familiar and known as part of the leisure setting. The second is the contribution of the component parts of playfulness, namely, spontaneity, joy, and sense of humor, to the use of leisure, or the development of the leisure approach.

Play as an outgrowth of the familiar and known. Recent studies (Hutt, 1971; Switzky, et. al., 1974) have emphasized the difference between

play and exploration, demonstrating that play occurs when the ecological setting is familiar and the child experiences a sense of mastery over the materials. We can readily extrapolate from childhood play to the play of the adult in his or her leisure. What it means is that one's backyard or basement playroom are the natural settings for the kind of activity that is voluntary and does not arouse the tensions inherent in a new situation. Naturally, materials for play need to be part of the setting. It is interesting to note that the one industry that has not suffered from the recession but has, on the contrary, expanded is the one catering to leisure activities. This development rated even an article on the front page of the New York Sunday Times (Shabecoff, 1975). Not only the Broadway theater in New York City but also the Bowling alleys in Detroit are doing a thriving business. And to the New Yorkers going to the theater, the ballet, and the opera, this represents their backyard in a figurative sense as is the bowling alley to a different socioeconomic class not only in Detroit but all over the country. Let us look at some of the alternatives that might have been considered a year or two ago. The New Yorker might have been on a packaged tour to Europe or the Orient; the Detroiter on a camping trip to Canada or even a cruise in the Caribbean. To the majority of these individuals all these settings would have been new. Time and energy would have been expanded on just finding your way around. And more often than not these trips are so engineered that you are whisked from one unfamiliar setting to the next with ne'r a minute to spare to catch your breath. From what we know about play, these are not the environmental settings to encourage such activity--voluntary, free of tension, with no immediate goal in mind. Consider now the opportunities which familiar settings offer. A concrete example from my own recent

experience will perhaps best illustrate this point. My husband and I like to go to the theater but found it too irksome to book so far ahead for plays touted by critics, which often meant also astronomical ticket prices. The development of repertory theater has, at least for us, put back the play element into play going. Returning time and again, you get to know not only the physical setting but the actors, too. You see familiar plays in new productions; and new plays with familiar people. It provides the basis for the quintessence of play, namely, playfulness.

The Influence of Playfulness on leisure. Let us, for a moment, look at playfulness in a non-technical framework, and also concretize for ourselves a playful individual. We would not be far wrong if we first saw an ease of movement in physical, social, and cognitive functioning. This is the person who sits and moves in a relaxed manner; who gestures gracefully, who naturally puts an arm around another to establish physical contact. That same ease of movement is also characteristic of social interactions--becoming part of a group and leaving a group in a friendly manner. In cognitive functioning, such spontaneity is more readily observed in young children. Unfortunately, the evaluative element enters already in the primary classroom, exerts an ever increasing influence at higher educational levels, and becomes even more dominant in the occupational world. This development encroaches on, and may ultimately stifle, cognitive spontaneity altogether. Behaviorally, we refer here to the playing with ideas, to reshuffling familiar notions into new combinations without worrying whether it is the right or expected answer. It is understandable, therefore, that in our own studies the bubbling effervescence of playfulness had separated itself from intellectual curiosity. It is also

understandable from empirical observation that joy and sense of humor cannot enter when one is uptight about how one is doing. Besting others or beating a rival provides exhilaration that has the ingredient of gloating in it, which is a difference that we need to recognize and acknowledge, especially when we are interested in prosocial behavior. Our own emphasis has, therefore, been on intrinsic joy and friendly wit. The latter is particularly important when we consider current studies of humor in which the majority of investigators need to include the aggressive element.

How does this prosocial emphasis in playfulness help in the use of leisure? At this point, it is useful to remember the two major approaches to leisure, namely, that it is time at one's disposal and that it is also an attitude to any kind of activity. The psychological distancing that spontaneity, joy, and sense of humor presupposes in order to become playfulness is a key to the use of our time in play and work, or in Neulinger's definition, that leisure needs to be looked at as a frame for enjoyable and productive activity. When we say we do things leisurely, we mean without environmental press, such as deadlines or evaluative settings. This underlines again the relationship between playfulness, cognitive style, and leisure. There are periods in the creative process--and these may be moments, hours, days, or weeks--when environmental press needs to be suspended; when the familiar needs to be incubated; when playfulness needs to be used as the dominant mode of approach. For this to happen you need leisure, and in this sense, the time element of leisure would be important. The underlying idea of the sabbatical--lying fallow with the existing nutrients or ingredients of knowledge would be an example. If we

now expand this concept of suspension and ask ourselves how an individual can actually endure this state, then we come to the attitudinal aspect of leisure. Important work has already been started in this direction. The Zeitgeist is changing, and our young people may be showing us the way. The satisfactions derived from the Protestant work ethic may need to be supplemented, if not altogether supplanted, by the playful approach to life in general.

Summary and Conclusions

1. Playfulness, first identified and measured as a quality of play and related to divergent thinking, was presented as transcending play and becoming an attitude of the player, and thus part of the individual's self-expression and self-definition.
2. The importance of the component parts of Playfulness (PF) namely, spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor, were illustrated in relationship to cognitive style, especially creative potential.
3. The contribution of Playfulness both as an ingredient to leisure time and as an attitude to leisure was seen in its relationship to working within familiar settings, and within a psychologically relaxed climate.
4. The need to encourage Playfulness in the classroom as part of "fun in learning" was underlined, and the carry-over into leisure-type settings illustrated.
5. Finally, further research on the components of PF--spontaneity, manifest, joy, and sense of humor--may lead to socially significant knowledge, including relating PF to leisure behavior in a postindustrial society.

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